



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

Title

Establishing Healthy Policies within the Church: A 360 degree approach to Healthy Eating and Active Living

Intervention Summary

The majority of African Americans in California are battling preventable illnesses. In California alone 68% of African American adults are overweight or obese, which contributes to the high rates of preventable illnesses. In regards to Sacramento County 69.9% of African Americans are overweight or obese according to the 2011 California Health Interview Survey.

Health Education Council is dedicated to help reduce the rapid spread of preventable diseases by fighting against obesity in the faith-based community. Soul food continues to be a staple of the African American diet. This diet has affected this community by increased cases of diabetes, heart disease and cancer. As result, we are committed to encouraging healthy lifestyle changes and choices within the African American church. Being part of the solution to end preventable illnesses, particularly those that disproportionately affect African Americans, means making small changes that lead to policy, systems and environmental changes.

All Nations Church of God in Christ has an exemplary story of implementing healthy changes within the congregation with pastoral support and backing. During an initial Rethink Your Drink training for leadership, the church administrator declared, "The drink of choice for all church related meetings, events, etc. will be water," concluding that the church will no longer have sugary beverages as an option. This statement served as a rallying statement to congregants and was the beginning of something great.

All Nations immediately took action in making policy changes within the church and community events. They wanted to address unhealthy habits in the church by incorporating nutrition classes, physical activity, retail education, nutrition activities for children and trainings for leadership. To further promote environmental and policy innovations within the church, Health Education Council's Faith program partnered with Peer to Peer and Retail programs to foster a complete lifestyle change in the church. As a result, our collaboration provided well attended nutrition workshops, a farm tour, store tours and trainings.

Rethink your Drink Training and Spa Water Tasting

Congregants and leadership attended this training that addressed healthy drink options, the identification of drinks with added sugar and making the connection between sugar-sweetened drinks and health risks. The participants enjoyed tasting strawberry and mint spa water, received a variety of recipe cards and discussed personal goals to assist with the consumption of more water into their diets.

Peer to Peer Nutrition Classes

Approximately 30 individuals attended the peer-to-peer workshop classes Eat Healthy, Be Active adult nutrition education classes (conducted in the main sanctuary) that addressed many healthy subjects (see below). The congregants committed to 6 weeks of nutrition classes where they learned techniques and tactics on how to live a healthier life. The congregants enjoyed food tastings, physical activities and cooking demonstrations. Following the conclusion of the nutrition classes, congregants and church leadership expressed gratitude and many had adapted better eating habits and incorporated physical activity.

Lesson 1: Enjoy Healthy Foods that Taste Great

Lesson 2: Quick, Healthy Meals and Snacks

Lesson 3: Eating Healthy on a Budget

Lesson 4: Tips for Losing Weight and Keeping it Off

Lesson 5: Making Healthy Eating Part of Your Total Lifestyle

Lesson 6: Physical Activity is Key to Living Well

Farm Tour

The children and their guardians from All Nations Church visited Davis Ranch Farm and learned about a "farm year" and farming practices (how the soil is prepared, planted, cultivated, irrigated and harvested). Children were taught the nutritional benefits of eating healthy fruits and vegetables. The children and their guardians enjoyed a tractor trailer ride around the farm where they were shown different crops growing in the fields. They were given the opportunity to pick a standard produce box (20-25 pounds) with various kinds of produce which included squash, corn, bell peppers and fresh dill. After a few hours on the farm, the children and their guardians enjoyed physical activity, a healthy lunch, a lesson/tasting on Rethink your Drink and My Plate. Each family

received Champions for Change bags with Champions for Change hats and t-shirts, Cal Fresh information and healthy recipes. As a result of the farm tour the children and their parents were able to make the connection from farm to fork. Several students asked questions such as, “Why are the bell peppers so dirty and on the ground?” A majority of the children did not understand the correlation between the farm and their forks. This trip allowed the children to make the connection of how food is delivered to their tables.

Store Tours

We partnered with the Retail program to implement a 1.5 hour-tour store tour coupled with the \$10 Cooking Matters Challenge. The store tour assisted congregants on a tight budget to make healthy grocery purchases and preparing healthy meals at home. In addition, congregants learned smart shopping, reading food labels, comparing unit prices and finding whole grain foods and produce.

The \$10 Challenge, encouraged congregants to use the skills they learned to buy a healthy meal for a family of four, for under \$10. Participants took home a booklet with recipes and shopping tips, a reusable grocery bag, and \$10 worth of healthy groceries.

As a result of the partnerships with the Peer to Peer and Retail programs All Nations Church maximized their “kickoff” to a very healthy congregation. The impact has had a significant influence on programming in the church. The church leadership began implementing health and fitness into areas of the church where it did not exist. At a recent “Back to School Day” the church leadership added basketball courts and spa water stations to encourage children to be active while staying hydrated. In addition, the church is currently strategizing a plan to add a farm stand to raise money to sustain their new health initiatives.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

Like many churches, All Nations Church does not have an extensive budget to offer programs such as Zumba or Pilates to their congregants who would like to work out on a regular basis at the church with other congregants. However, this church has worked with little to no budget to make significant policy changes. The idea of creating a farm stand at the church is an idea that will help raise money to fund healthy programs.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

All Nations Church has created a “healthy church” committee that will have several functions: health ministry fund development, training, programming and tabling at health

fairs and policy changes. The committee was developed as a result of the church's desire to sustain healthy practices and programming with the assistance of church leadership and members from the congregation. The church is also actively searching for grants that will assist them in further leveraging health programs.

Contact information about this Narrative

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